

April 27, 2009 - Equal Pay Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, April 28, 2009

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D- NY-28), Chairwoman,

House Rules Committee

Re: Equal Pay Day 2009

Annual Equal Pay Day

Tomorrow, April 28, 2009, is Equal Pay Day. Every April, advocates for equal pay mark the time of year in which the wages paid to American women "catch up" to the wages paid to men from the previous year. In other words, because the average woman earns less, she must work longer for the same amount of pay.

The Importance of Pay Equity

It has been 46 years since President John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law, but widespread pay inequality still exists throughout the United States. When the law passed, women earned 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men. Today, women still earn 78 cents for every dollar earned by men, meaning the wage gap has narrowed by less than half a cent per year.

Equal pay is not just a women's issue, it is a family issue. Lower pay for women means lower incomes for families and less money for essentials, like food, child-care, and health-care. Especially in these tough economic times as workers are losing their jobs and seeing their wages slashed, closing the wage gap will ensure fairness for all American workers and their families.

Pay Equity is a Priority for Rep. Slaughter and 111th Congress

Achieving equal pay for women is one of the top priorities of the 111th Congress and equal pay advocates like Congresswoman Slaughter. Already significant progress has been made but there is more work to do.

Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

In late January, with Rep. Slaughter's strong support the House and Senate cleared the final version of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and on January 29, President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law. It was the first major bill the President signed into law.

This bill is key for women and other workers. It restores a basic protection against pay discrimination by rectifying the May 2007 Ledbetter v Goodyear Supreme Court decision that overturned precedent and made it much more difficult for workers to pursue pay discrimination claims.

Paycheck Fairness Act

The enactment of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was a major victory for equal pay advocates. However, it is now critical that the Senate pass and send to the President's desk the Paycheck Fairness Act, which the House, including Rep. Slaughter, passed on January 9.

While the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act restores the right to seek legal redress for pay discrimination, the Paycheck Fairness Act provides the tools necessary to give new teeth to the Equal Pay Act and provide incentives for businesses to follow the law in the first place.

This critical bill would provide a much-needed update to the 46-year-old Equal Pay Act by providing more effective remedies to women who are not being paid equal wages for doing equal work. The bill would also prohibit employers from retaliating against employees who share salary information with their co-workers; require the Department of Labor to enhance outreach and training efforts to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities; and create a new grant program to help strengthen the negotiation skills of girls and women.

The House passed the bill by a vote of 256-163 on January 9. It is now critical that the Senate pass the bill as well.

###